

LIMERICK SOCIALIST

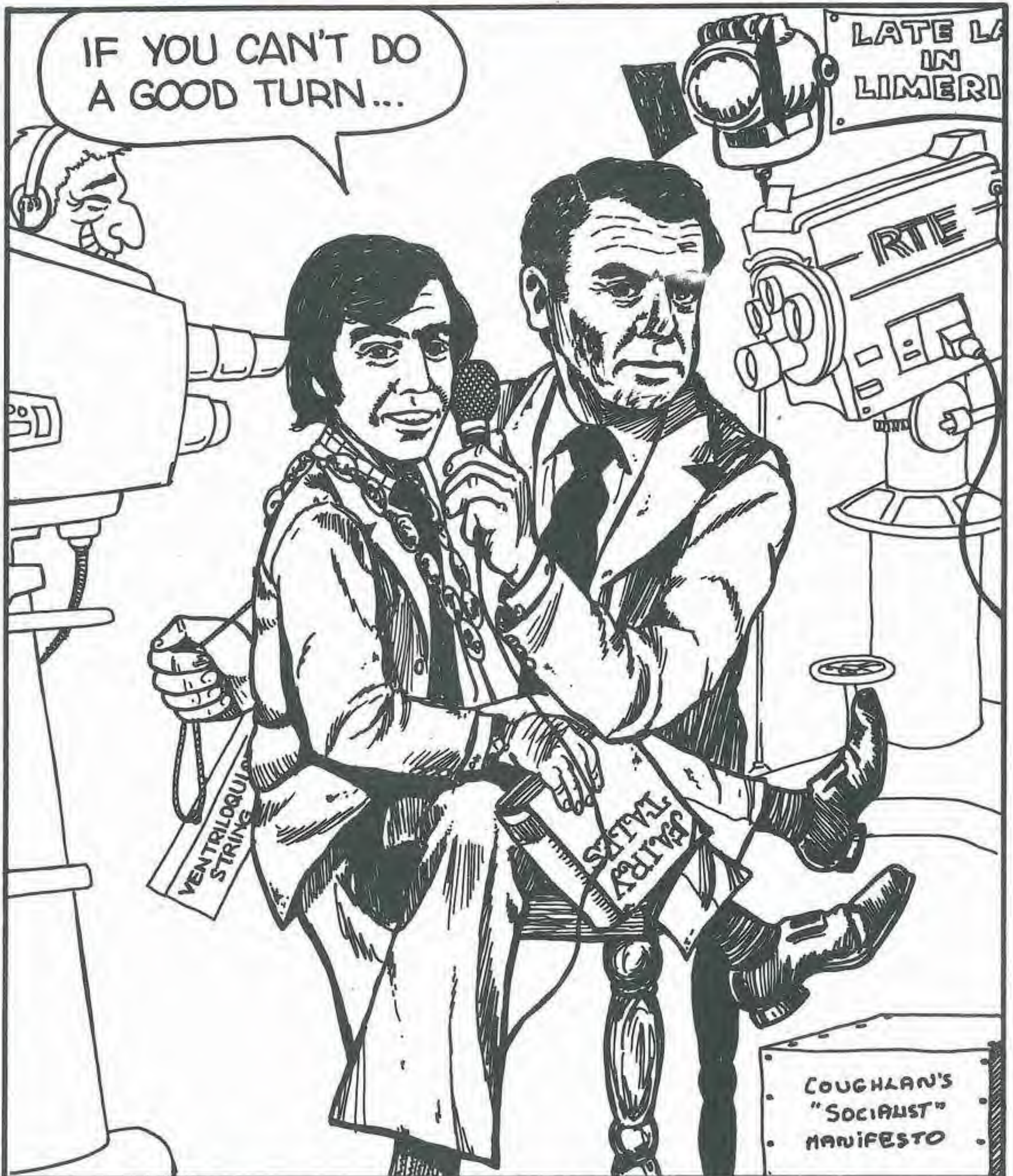
APRIL, 1976

70p

VOL. 5, NO. 4

THE
VOICE
OF THE
WORKER

That which is good for the working class I esteem patriotic. — James Connolly



"NOW, CAN'T MY SON, THADY, TALK FOR HIMSELF?"

Every dogma has its day

BY DERMOT McEVOY

MATHEMATICS was never my strong point and my formal education had ceased when Maths-through-the-medium—of-Irish took its place on the curriculum. So you'll understand my bafflement over the arithmetic I encounter on my daily round. For instance, in a publichouse near O'Connell Bridge, Dublin, where I have a lunchtime coffee-type drink Guinness sells at 41p a pint, but a half-pint is by no means 20½p, it is 25p. Two half-pints, I was assured, still make one pint — that had not been changed — so it was easy even for me to see that a pint bought in two halves would cost 50p! The 'medium' through the medium is an expensive item: robbery I'd call it, but it is legal. My second lesson in the new maths was in a food supermarket where I went seeking a substitute for the Stilton cheese I'd given up for Lent (a self-imposed deprivation encouraged by an unexplained price-jump of from 47p to 62p a portion). I picked up an 8 oz. box of Camembert priced at 80p. Too dear, I thought so I went for a 4 oz. box. The price tag showed by no means one-half of 80p, but a whopping 48p. And twice 48 is . . . but I won't weary you.

This sort of maths is general, so a whole *corpus* of education has passed me by and the midnight oil I burned over Quantum Theory and Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle has all been wasted! All in vain too were the pleasant hours I spent with Sir Arthur Eddington, the geophysicist whose observation in South Africa of a total eclipse of the sun verified Einstein's Special Theory of Relativity (and he was cheered by my headline encapsulation of that great moment: Light Caught Bending!)! Maths-through-the-medium-of-Irish must surely deserve the title Prices Caught Bending, better still, Bent. (In case my old friend Billy Leonard, of New York Jottings, a quick-study if there ever was one — thinks I've let the side down, not so. I did a bit of lateral thinking over that cheese, put the 8 oz. box in my pocket and left — without paying! Restitution of the 80p will be easy; I shall simply buy ten half-boxes at the inflated price of 48p each. Howzat umpire?).

AFTER the adders St. Patrick or, as some would have it, the accident of geology, did not banish, let us consider some latter-day snakes and their antics on that Summit of Irish Cultural Achievement — *The Late Late Show* (Limerick edition). How low can you get, how ghastly, how bloody awful! Mayor Thady, true to form, somehow "helped" with the issuing of tickets and with a few exceptions — I'm told they sneaked in — helped fill the TV hall with his *claque*. What message had he for the people of Ireland? — he wasn't a Left-wing socialist, by no means, and he wasn't a Right-wing one either. Oh, yes, he was specially proud of the protest-march over the foul kidnapping and mistreatment of Dr. Herrema. But he had nothing to do with the organisation of the public protest; though that was the impression he tried to give viewers. What cheek, what cheap opportunism! Yet we had the standard-bearer of Irish Culture, Mister Gay Byrne (favourite reading *The Valley of the Dolls*), allowing him to get away with it.

Then there were the cheers for Charlie Haughey who'd exempted Culture just like farming from Income Tax — the exemption does not, of course, cover books, even required reading in schools. What merit there is in this, indeed what morality, escapes me. Gay Byrne, however, went on to display his utter ignorance of the Revenue concession to artists and writers by insisting that, again thanks to Champagne Charlie, greetings cards produced as a commercial venture by the woman artist exposed on the programme (did she pay for the advertisement?) were also free of tax. But they are not exempt; they are commercial art just like a poster and, let me say parenthetically, that the sample get-well card shown to

viewers at the end of the razamataz should be kept out of the sight of any patient by any nurse with patient's welfare at heart. It was amateurish, a shocking melange.

What a priest from Feakle was doing on the Limerick Show beats me. Are there no Limerick priests with anything worthwhile to say? The priest, though, is doing good work — I wish there were more like him — in getting houses built for £6,000 that would "otherwise" cost £10,000—£12,000. There wasn't time, of course, to go into the Mathematics of the Otherwise. However, on behalf of Mayor Thady and his showbiz butty, Mister Gay Byrne, I shall resolve the equation: the difference between the two prices represents the exorbitant profit shared by the speculative builder and his partner in crime, the fringe bank. Howzat?

If that's Limerick Culture, come back Hermann Goering, all is forgiven! Goering, you may remember, is credited with saying, "When I hear the word 'culture' I reach for my gun". Concerned Limerick citizens should get together and see that the *next* Mayor is even half-literate and articulate. It would be a bonus if he were numerate as well, able, say, to do sums like: If 8 oz. of cheese cost 80p, what do 4 oz. cost?

BUT it is not just Limerick that has an ignoramus as its titular head, the whole country is run by ignoramuses. I don't want you to take my word for it, consider what *Liam de Paor*, Lecturer in History at U.C.D., wrote in the *Irish Times* a few months back: "The Christian Brothers and others who provided the forcing grounds for the founders of the new Irish State, directed their efforts to rendering the new Catholic middle-class competitive in terms of the requirements of the imperial administration in Ireland, sharpening verbal and certain manipulative skills, but dulling sensibilities in relation to most of the arts and many of the pleasurable aspects of peaceful life".

Teaching orders of priests, de Paor goes on, provided a generation of people who were pious, capable of handling the lower offices, but deaf and blind to the higher achievements of western civilisation. So long as they were sheltered and their real inadequacies excused by a remarkable prosperity in the western world, they could, he says, defend their destruction of so much in Ireland on the grounds that they were showing certain kinds of profits. That's Liam de Paor.

Now, let me add that in the economic blight of today the utter worthlessness of our leaders is exposed. Their only plan is to add 2p to this and 3p to that; let the people eat, not cake, but bread at cake prices and put the pint on a prices pillar well out of their reach. As for culture, let the *summa desiderata* be *The Late Late Show*. Jesus wept — then Jesus died!

AS WE slide into the barbarism that Dean Inge predicted for us, we find Drs. Conor Cruise O'Brien and Jeremiah Newman drafting Notes for a New Culture — from differing points of view of course. As they get on with it, I propose a Month's Mind for Archbishop Roberts, S.J. Dr. Roberts, while still a youngish man, insisted to the Holy Father that he should relinquish control of the Archdiocese of Bombay, that a native Indian priest would be more appropriate. He retired to Farm Street, Mayfair, and, when pastoral cares allowed, used pulpit and Press to support Family Planning by The Pill and other means. No, the Pope did not silence him; the late Cardinal Heenan tried to — and failed.

I often chatted with him; he never sneered at men of other faiths, or of none. He would not jibe at Dr. Conor Cruise O'Brien because of his agnosticism; he regarded such an approach as utterly unbecoming and unchristian. Archbishop Roberts felt that it was a crime to bring into the world all those extra mouths that needed to be fed, clothed, housed, educated, that such manna as there is is contracting and

casey's column.... by John Casey

THE LABOUR PARTY

The time has surely come to question the role and the future of the Irish Labour Party. In terms of parliamentary representation and mass support the party has made little headway since the foundation of the state and one must of necessity question this failure. The Civil War and the influence

of the Catholic Church, which has always been hostile to trade unionism and labour organisations, have been factors in holding the party back, but these factors cannot be solely blamed. The leadership of the party has been decidedly weak and ineffectual. For many people the Labour Party signed its death warrant in Tom Johnson's silence to Dev's command: "Labour must wait". Johnson's successors, the Nortons, Corishes, et alii have been as ineffectual as himself.

Many workers have pinned their hopes on the Labour Party, seeing it in the same line as the British Labour Party. These are the people who talk about majority Labour Party government and dream of building a *Tribune* - like group within the party. They are as usual living in cloud cuckoo land. The British Labour Party is the product of an industrialised society, the child of great industrial cities, the political wing of a gigantic trade union movement. The British worker couldn't stomach voting Tory, so the British Labour Party was born. The feelings of workers generally for the Conservatives was probably summed up by a Welsh miner at the last election. He was voting Labour not because he was a devotee of the party but because he believed the Conservatives thought that he and his ilk belonged in the trees where they could be fed bananas.

Ireland is different. It was and still is primarily an agricultural country, governed by the mores and beliefs of past centuries. This situation is changing but that does not mean that the Labour Party will reap the benefits of the change. At present, the party is a real mixed bag. Some months ago, when a delegation led by Conor Cruise O'Brien was on a mission to Portugal to confer with Mario Soares, a report appeared in the papers that the C.I.A. had supplied Soares with arms for use against the revolutionaries. Brendan Halligan jumped in quickly to deny this saying he knew Mario and that the said gentleman would have no truck with the C.I.A. However,

earmarked for the discreet chomp of the bourgeoisie. Is Archbishop Roberts to be called 'monstrous'? Not in my lexicon.

FORTUNATELY times change and every dogma has its day. There's the attitude of the Irish hierarchy towards Russia for example. A generation ago, the Archbishop of Tuam sacked a teacher named Liam MacGabhainn for being a member of Saor Eire, which advocated a Workers' Republic on James Connolly lines. After a spell on *An Phoblacht* he called on the *Irish Press* looking for a job and I was happy to recommend him. Years later, while working on another newspaper, Liam went to Russia - and wrote about it. Not by any means ecstatically. And what happened? The *Catholic Standard*, organ of the hierarchy, went for him bell, book and candle, and croziers flailing. Result: Liam was quietly dropped from his regular Radio Eireann talks. He has survived, but no thanks to the bishops.

Yet there is not a whimper of protest today at the *Irish Press* sponsoring and advertising by poster - trips to Russia as prizes for schoolchildren and the *Sunday Press* announces a series showing "the human side" of Russia! From the Irish bishops, from the *Catholic Standard*, there has not been a whimper, not a sausage! Has Russia changed all that much that it is now the OK thing for Irish children? I don't think so; indeed, I know so. What has changed is the Church and the Irish bishops. And they'll accept as reasonable, in due course,

post-Watergate post-Vietnam, post-Chile, one would have to see Kissinger's corpse before one could believe he was dead. How then can the 'Left' in the party (the fifty-odd) bed down with possible C.I.A. collaborators, opportunists like O'Leary, Ruairi Quinn, young Thady and dyed-in-the-wool gombeen men like Steve Coughlan, Michael Pat Murphy and Dan Spring. A party that has consistently failed does not inspire confidence or win support, and there must be many party supporters and trade unionists considering cutting the cost of years of service, thus allowing the party to become the "radical" wing of Fine Gael which is what it is.

Then what have the other parties to offer? The C.P.I. is not making progress. The membership of the party is low and there were the recent defections have not helped this position. The Irish people have not and are not ready to buy its form of communism. The leadership is tired and unimaginative, failing to integrate the party and its policies into the mainstream of Irish life. Hide-bound and bureaucratic, no light shines from there.

The Official Republicans were the party with the best chance of winning popular support. They had clubs throughout the country; they attracted bright young men and women. Republicanism had the mystique which found adherents in bogland farms and on industrial floors. But they squandered all: the war with the I.R.S.P., the savage feuds with the Provos and the Larry White affair have all helped to erode support. Some of these they could not have avoided, others they certainly could. One way or another, they have lost valuable members and public support.

The answer? The answer would seem to be a new united party of the left and a tentative move has been made with the formation of the Left Wing Alternative grouping. However, the chance of getting these bodies to form a party and sink their differences are mighty slim. Amongst them there are so many messiahs that John Kelly and his backers know that they can sleep soundly for many moons. And no effort has been made to include other left-wing groups in the alliance. It was Brendan Behan who said that the first thing any political party must have is an immediate split. Unfortunately, we have had chasms for too long, while back at the ranch the ranchers eat sirloin the ranchhands substitute package rice for potatoes.

the attitudes of Archbishop Roberts and Dr. Conor Cruise O'Brien towards Family Planning. Meanwhile, of course, they will use every dirty trick in the bag to try to hound Dr. O'Brien from public life and they'll have as allies such skunks as Senator Michael D. Higgins and that wingless wonder, Thady. WE must not be conned into following the rabble. It is consoling to think that Archbishop Roberts is out of reach of croziers and creatures.

AS a further illustration of the changing attitude of the Church - when the pressure is on - a priest turned up Irish TV recently opposing the introduction of divorce for those who may wish to avail of it. His bland line was that there was no need for it as annulments are now readily obtainable. He did not seem worried that such annulments are not recognised by the state, nor did he mention that if the erstwhile life-partners remarry and have the children Dr. Newman expects them to have, the State should call these children bastards. Indeed, the implication was that the State would not dare to and, knowing as we do that the Church runs the State, he's probably right. Would some theologian tell me can Protestants get these handy annulments from the Catholic Church? After all, they cannot get annulments from their own Church. An announcement would be timely. With such annulments and a bowl of soup thrown in, we'd then be well on the way to A (Catholic) Nation Once Again. And I'd be on the mail boat. See you in Church.

**PART
SIXTEEN**

THE DEATH OR GLORY MISSION

The attempt to burn Limerick as the Tans had burned Cork, caused angry comment in the city. While the citizens admired the daring comedy, they laughed in relief at its failure. In the New Barracks, the different contingents restrained their mirth and urged that more positive action be taken against the Staters. Only by gun peal and slogan cry could those enemies of the Republic be routed.

Fifty young men, aged between eighteen and twenty-five, who had never fired an angry shot in their lives, were sent from the New Barracks to attack the Staters in William Street. To identify each other they had red armbands sewn on their sleeves. Because the armbands were sewn on, they were committed men. To remove the armbands they would have to sit down and pick out the stitches. They marched ten feet apart on both sides of the street. On the route to attack they were urged to enrich their political faith by reciting with fervour three verses of the *Soldier's Song*.

Their route from the barrack was through Edward Street and Parnell Street in a straight downhill march to Roche's Street, and from there to Thomas Street, parallel with Roche's Street. There was a Death or Glory Mission but the path to glory stunk to the sky from the sewage dumped on the streets during the previous weeks. From Thomas Street they were to enter Fox's Bow and attack and rout over one hundred Staters established in William Street. They were to attack entrenched men who had a fortnight's aggressive firing practice. They were to attack the Staters who were aware of their movements and had watched their approach with interest and surmise. It was folly to send such innocents on such a witless enterprise.

They were halted in Thomas Street by a burst of rifle and Lewis gun fire from across the river, at a range of three hundred yards. This line of fire was partly obstructed by a boat house by Sarsfield Bridge. This was a flank attack which caused them some surprise. The possibility of a flank attack had not been revealed to them. They were nonplussed and thrown into confusion. What should have been an orderly and militant advance was turned into a disorderly rout, by the bullets raising dust and stones off the roadway. They were irresolute. Their orders demanded that they fulfil their mission. Reason insisted that they go places. The Staters emerging from some of the houses and from Fox's Bow showed them the error of their ways.

Those who were light of foot made a quick retreat. Those who were slow on their pins were taken prisoners. The fleeing ones were pursued by the Staters, who firing over their heads urged the need for greater speed, or a full stop and surrender.

As the pursued and the pursuers entered Roche's Street, they were mixed together with those taken prisoner. On this account the Diehards holding positions in Roche's Street could not open fire and defend their positions. With reckless unconcern the Staters pursued the fleeing few into the positions in Roche's Street and routed the defenders.

In this unplanned and unpremeditated manner, the Staters gained control of Roche's Street. The route to the New Barracks via Parnell Street and Gerald Griffin Street was now sealed off.

The Staters had isolated all four barracks from each other, or nearly so. The New Barracks still had a route via Carey's Road to the Ordinance Barrack. Those two barracks still had a line of retreat to the South into the counties of Limerick, Cork and Kerry. Those who were taken prisoner were held in William Street police barrack and eventually were taken to the gaol in Mulgrave Street. It was a sad day for them and a waste of the joyous years of youth.

THE THREE ARMOUR CARS

When the British were evacuating the country, they handed

The Fourth Siege of Limerick

over three armour cars to the Provisional Government. These cars were used by the National Army in enforcing the will of the people by establishing a democratic government as apposed to a military dictatorship, which the opponents of the Treaty desired to set up.

The cars were christened *Ballinalee*, *Danny Boy* and *Slievenamon*. *Ballinalee* was so called in honour of Sean McKeon of Ballinalee, Co. Longford. This car had been captured from the British and used in an abortive attempt to rescue Sean McKeon from Mountjoy Jail, where he was awaiting execution just before the Truce. *Danny Boy* was named in honour of Dan Breen, whose daring exploits against the British had caused them to offer a reward of £5,000 for his capture. By naming the car *Danny Boy*, it was hoped that this modest tribute to his daring courage might influence him to side with Treaty party. Unfortunately, Dan was misled by alien influences and could not accept the oath of allegiance embodied in the Treaty. Some few years later it was discovered an oath was a mere formula that divine revelation was withheld from Dan. *Slievenamon* was so called by Michael Collins, who liked the song, the opening lines of which "All alone all alone by the wave washed shore, all alone in the festive hall" seemed to sum up his position on the acceptance of the Treaty by a majority of the Dail deserted by his friends in favour of aliens.

The names of the cars were painted in white letters three inches high on the movable turret, so that anyone shot at from one of those cars would know which one had hit him. There were no lamps, candles, search-lights or other gadgets on any of those three cars. All three cars were alike and carried a Vickers gun projecting from the turret. During the Civil War, it was found expedient to carry a ten-foot steel bound ash plank strapped to the side of the cars. The single plank was often used to cross over many of the blasted bridges which had had portion of one side undamaged.

Many of the "Engineers" with the Diehards had been quarry workers of the County Councils. The demolition experience of those "Engineers" was blasting rock in a quarry, consequently their demolition of bridges often resulted in only a large bite being taken out of one side of an arch of a bridge and the bridge could be crossed on one side on foot. By using a strong plank across the six to eight foot gap, armour cars and Crossley tenders would cross over quite often in the race to the South.

Two armoured touring cars were also handed over to the Provisional Government by the British. The cars were large, luxuriously comfortable and expensive in petrol. On turning a handle on the doors, steel shutters could be raised or lowered. A steel shutter could also be raised in front of the windshield. The shutters had a port hole from which rifles or revolvers could be used. The canvas roof or hood of those cars could be raised or lowered and folded back if required. The cars were designed solely for protection of the occupants and were never used in attack. The cars had been used by British generals in France and were brought into Ireland for the use of British generals when travelling around the country. One of those cars was used by General Michael Collins when, as Commander-in-Chief of the National Army, he took over the country from the British, who, for three years previous, had offered a reward of £10,000 for his capture dead or alive. This

was the car used by Collins when he was killed in Co. Cork.

The first of the three armour cars to come into the city was Danny Boy; it had come in by the Dublin Road and was concealed in the opening at William Street Barracks. The car remained hidden and guarded like a State secret until the need arose to reveal the presence of this secret weapon which was the equal in fire power to three hundred men. On the day following the arrival of Danny Boy in the city, the bridge over the Mulcair at Annacotty was blasted, so that no more armour or supplies could come in by the Dublin Road.

The Diehards held upper William Street which was barricaded and mined. They held the Ordinance Barracks in Mulgrave Street and the Munster Fair Tavern, near St. Laurence's Cemetery. The distance between William Street, and the Tavern is about six hundred yards, almost in a straight line. Half way up Mulgrave Street, the Staters held the county gaol as an impregnable post but, because of the covering fire from the ordinance Barracks, and the Tavern they were unable to use the gaol as a guest house, with a military Governor as guest master.

They were unhappy and peevish at being unable to extend their hospitality to all those who were enjoying the "Freedom of the City" without the lawful authority of the Mayor and Aldermen, who alone could lawfully confer that great honour. It is most discouraging for the proprietor of a Grade A Hotel to find his premises practically boycotted. For several days, the Staters approached the barrier in William Street in the armour car, Danny Boy. They were trying to discover at what point was the barrier mined. Their tactic was to dash at speed towards one point and halting suddenly at a safe distance provoke the Diehards to a premature and panic pressing of the plunger to explode the mine. The ambition of the Staters was to take the Ordinance and establish contact with the County Gaol. Each time that they came within fifty yards of the

barrier, they halted and cleaned the windows with machine gun fire. They were unable to enter Tanyard Lane or Cathedral Street because those streets were also barricaded and manned by the Diehards. Failing in their efforts to take the Ordinance Barracks, the Staters eventually by a roundabout route reached a point above the gaol in Mulgrave Street. With Danny Boy and ten men in a lorry, they raced up to the Munster Fair Tavern and eleven feet from the front of the Tavern they cleaned all the front windows with a Vickers gun. The ten men from the lorry, pot shooting at the side windows, made the action seem hostile. In a matter of five minutes, the little garrison was compelled to surrender. They were threatened that if they did not surrender some hand grenades would be tossed into the rooms and yards. Fifteen men were taken prisoner. The Leader was found unconscious from two scalp wounds. It is unwise to attempt to look through a window being cleaned with a Vickers gun. Led by Danny Boy, the prisoners were removed to the County Gaol; the leader was placed in the County Infirmary Hospital directly opposite the gaol. The gaol was now open for business on a large scale.

These things having been done, the infantrymen returned to the Tavern and were reinforced later. They immediately barricaded the Tipperary and Kilmallock Roads which branched from Mulgrave Street at the Tavern like the letter "Y". As a result of this action, the Staters controlled most of the perimeter of the city. The Diehards had a line of retreat still open to them on the South West at Ballinacorra leading to Patrickswell and the counties of Cork and Kerry.

It was the humane ambition of the Staters to get those men out of the city and cause their dispersal without bloodshed. In taking the Tavern, the Staters now controlled the water supplies to the city from the nearby Tank Field in the Fair Green.

(To be continued).

BALLHOPS

THE CHOSEN ONE

The President of Ireland, Mr. Cearbhall O Dalaigh, is reported to have asked His Lordship Dr. Jeremiah Newman, Roman Catholic Bishop of Limerick, to form a Government following Mr. Liam Cosgrave's resignation as Taoiseach and his decision to enter a monastery. Mr. Cosgrave was adamant that he could not be compared to a rat deserting a sinking ship. He said that he had held on until the ship had been well and truly sunk and that his decision to enter the monastery was motivated by his desire to make reparation for the sins of his former Government colleagues.

Dr. Newman, interviewed by press correspondents, stated that he wasn't surprised at this development, as he had been expecting the call for some time. He confirmed that Dr. Caird, the Protestant Bishop of Limerick, would not be included in his Cabinet and added that as the country had had a belly full of political Coalitions, religious Coalitions would not do any better. Dr. Newman stated that his Government would present a united front and would have the backing of over 95% of the plain people of Ireland.

When asked if Dr. Noel Browne would feature in the new line-up, Dr. Newman said that there were too many "doctors of dissent" in the country and, as all forms of dissent would be outlawed by his Government, these doctors could not possibly play any part in the new administration. When asked if his remark, "The Cruiser can go to Hell", was also part of the same policy, the Bishop said that he had been quoted out of context and that his statement should not be taken at its face value. He added that he had great respect for Dr. Conor Cruise O'Brien as a diplomat in far, foreign lands and the farther away and more foreign the better. He stated that after careful consideration he was willing to appoint Dr. O'Brien as Ireland's first ambassador to Hell and, to balance this move,

that Tom O'Donnell was being sent to Connacht. Bishops Lucey and Browne (Galway) had approved of these plans, he said.

Dr. Newman denied rumours that he lacked compassion and humanity or that his long years behind the high walls of Maynooth would inhibit his political style. He pointed out that Archbishop Makarios had carried out a similar function in Cyprus - and he wasn't even a Catholic!

FIANNA FAIL'S PROVO POLICY

Mr. Gerry Collins, the Fianna Fail T.D. for West Limerick and Mr. James Tunney, T.D., spokesman for the Fianna Fail group on the Dublin Corporation, have complained bitterly about the recent spate of money robberies. "The present method of robbing banks and trains with guns and iron bars is far too messy and unnecessary", they said. They went on to recommend the Fianna Fail system of direct grants to the Provos as being a much safer and efficient means of ensuring the continuity of the Provos' bombing and shooting campaign in Northern Ireland. "Charlie Haughey gave £100,000 of the people's money to assist this worthy cause and it's a great pity that the Coalition Government don't take a few more hundred thousand leaves from the same money book", they concluded.

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REMEMBER LIMERICK!

A factory in Limerick. It is a Monday afternoon. The General Manager, accompanied by the Personnel Officer, enters the factory floor. He asks the shop steward to convene a meeting of the workers.

LATER:

The machines are silent. The workers listen. The Manager puffs on a cigar. The Personnel Officer talks. "And, in the light of present trading circumstances, which ye all know have been extremely unfavourable, the Board found that there was no option but to assess the viability of relevant sectors in the best competitive markets . . ."

A VOICE FROM THE BACK:

"What does that mean?"

PERSONNEL OFFICER:

"The Board of Directors, have had at all times, the interests of the workers at heart. This, as you well know, is a world wide economic recession, and we have, at all times, kept the trade union officials fully informed on developments. They are aware of the dire position, and it is imperative that action be taken . . ."

THAT EVENING:

Over 120 local workers are to lose their jobs this weekend. A statement from the company to-day said that the job losses would have been greater, except for the fact that the company had taken remedial action when the full extent of the economic picture became clear. The remaining 80 workers will be asked to take a pay cut until the company can achieve a position of recovery on the world market. A spokesman for the company warned that unless production costs were drastically cut, a threat hung over the remaining jobs in the factory. A union official told this newspaper that they had fought tooth and nail to retain the jobs, but that the dire economic situation was a major factor in the redundancies, which the workers had to accept. "Redundancy is a scourge of life in Limerick today", added the union official who said that the union would prepare to take militant action in the event of any future job losses in the city .

—Extract from the "Limerick News".

LATER THAT EVENING:
IN A CITY LOUNGE BAR:

"Have another brandy, John, I'm still dry after that factory floor meeting". The Personnel Officer smiles, as the Manager signals a young girl to take the order. "I don't know if I made the right decision in going down there, among all those machines and men". "But Michael", protested the Personnel Officer, "you have to put on a show . . . its part of the image . . . make an impression, at least pretend that you are interested".

The Personnel Officer sips the drink. "Think of the poor union official", he adds. "His job is even worse because the workers pay out money for him to represent them. He is on the spot . . . so that is why he has to make these militant noises . . . just like you have to pretend . . . it is all part of the system . . ."

MIDNIGHT:
A WORKERS HOUSE IN PROSPECT:

The door slams. There is shuffling in the hall. Slowly the sitting room door opens. An anxious wife looks up from the table. Her young husband is framed in the doorway. Upstairs, fast asleep there are three young children.

"I've been waiting for you", she begins to pour out a cup of

A PAGEANT WRITTEN BY A LIMERICK UNEMPLOYED WORKER

tea. "Sit down", she invites him. "I'm not hungry", he answers. "You're late", she ventures. "A union meeting", he reveals, "a bloody union meeting . . . talking all the shagging night".

"Don't get angry", she pleads, "it is not your fault that you were left go". "Then whose fault is it?" he asks sharply. "Who will I blame when I sign the DOLE? Who will I blame when the kids haven't enough to eat . . . or when you haven't a new dress? "Who's fault is it, I ask you", he shouts. Tears well in her eyes, as the frightened cries of young children are heard from upstairs.

NEXT MORNING:
LOCAL UNION HEADQUARTERS:

Two union officials are talking. One is pouring sugar into his tea. "That was a hectic meeting last night", he says. The second man looks at him. "Hectic my arse, did you see the fella who accused us of not doing enough to prevent redundancies. He wanted us to lead a deputation to Mickey Mullen to protest about the lay-off. We didn't cause the redundancies and we can't do much about them. The first man gave a slight laugh. "Ah, there's always a headcase like that; they know nothing about trade unionism", he declared. Anyway, Mickey is far too busy with the Provos and the I.R.S.P. to bother his head about what is happening down here in Limerick.

Exit the two men laughing.

AT THE FACTORY:
THE PERSONNEL OFFICER IS TALKING TO THE
WORKERS:

"And finally men, I don't have to tell you that Limerick has suffered badly from the crisis. We can all name factories, local factories that once gave employment to thousands, that are now empty buildings. Do we want the same to happen here? That is the vital question we have to ask ourselves. Your union official can explain it better than I can . . . but I know one thing, ye men are lucky, ye have jobs, and money coming in each week. Think of the fellows on the Dole. Compared to them ye are doing well. I know, from my long and friendly contact with the Board and with the workforce, that this request from the Directors will not go unheeded. What they ask is small: simply that a limited, and Government-approved pay pause come into operation. We are doing this to get into a viable position, for the good of the company, and for the stabilisation of jobs. Let us all work together to beat this crisis. Let us show spirit, and the will to win".

EXIT PERSONNEL OFFICER TRYING HARD TO LOOK
WORRIED:

THE WORKER'S HOUSE:

His wife is tidying the house. He comes down the stairs. "You're off", she comments. "Another meeting". "Yes". "Nothing will ever come of it", she says. "Why don't you just forget about the union. They do nothing except talk. What are they doing to help you and the rest of us? You're worse than a pack of auld women the whole lot of ye", she calls after her departing husband.

AT LUNCH IN A CITY HOTEL:

"My pep talk will do the trick", the Personnel Officer smiled, and the Manager edged his chair nearer to the table where a lunch of prime steak steamed on the table. "I'll have the workers eating out of your hand before very long", he said. "I'm a bit worried about this union guy. Will he play ball?" the Manager asks. "No need", said the Personnel Officer. "He won't rock the boat. And you need not worry about him leading the workers in taking over the factory. He'd

have a fit first. Don't worry about one little thing. The cut in the workforce, plus the higher profit margin will mean that you will do nearly the same business than last year", added the Personnel Officer. "Your profits will be maintained and your wages bill reduced".

"And I thought the crisis would affect us", laughed the Manager. "Eat up then . . . and have another drink. You did well in getting the workers to swallow our bluff".

AT THE LABOUR EXCHANGE:

The worker enters. There are hundreds more men around, crowding the long shabby barren hall. Wire grids separate the Civil Servants from the unemployed. The long lines move slowly. The pencils for "signing-on" are tied with string to the

grids. Someone has scraped "Up the Provos" on the counter. The worker gazes quizzically at the slogan. What have the Provos ever done to provide jobs? he asked. "Join the Provos and see the next world", he bitterly exclaims. The waiting workers manage cynical smiles.

The lines of men move uneasily. They avoid eyes and glance to the floor. "How long more will we sign in this bloody place", one asks. "Where are the bosses, managers and union officials", he shouts. "How many of them were made redundant?" He moves through the men. "When will ye realise what is happening?" he cries.

The worker faces the audience. "When", he shouts, when will all workers unite in building a society where people will have the right to work?"

The curtain falls on the silent stage. — The End.

THE WORKER

DAYS OF THE "BOTTOM DOG"

PART FOUR

Many times the publication of a labour newspaper had been discussed by the Limerick Trades Council in the Mechanic's Institute. Finally, on Saturday, June 8th, 1918, "The Worker", price one penny, was launched.

The President of the Trades and Labour Council, John Cronin, addressing his fellow workers in the first issue, wrote: "The oft repeated wish that we had a paper of our own, has at last, I am proud to say, become a reality. It is now up to you to rally around "The Worker" and by your united effort fix it so firmly on its base that failure will be impossible".

The paper was a strange mixture of labour radicalism and Catholic Church subservience. For example, while it urged the Limerick printers to seek a higher wage, it also said of Colmcille, that there was no greater figure in Irish history, "statesman, and patriot, poet, scholar, and saint".

While "The Worker", in a more labour-like stance, exposed that there were 1,660 houses unfit for human habitation in the city, it also advertised the Golden Jubilee of the Men's Confraternity of the Holy Family.

The apparent contradiction of accepting advertisements while at the same time setting out to fight Capitalism, did not seem to worry those behind "The Worker". Almost half a page went to the cinema advertising. The Tivoli had "A Tale of Two Cities", based on Dickens' story of the French Revolution which had cost £30,000 to produce. A second big attraction was Charlie Chaplin in "The Adventurer".

M.J. O'Connor, I.T.G.W.U., organiser, writing in "The Worker", said that the workers of Limerick were in a worse position than before the war. "Ever increasing prices of the necessities of life have forced the purchasing power of the pound down to an equivalent of nine shillings in pre-war time".

"The unskilled worker in the past was more or less looked down on by certain people", O'Connor wrote, "he was on the lowest rung of the trades union ladder. But of late he is climbing up. We want to put him higher still, where his proper place is", he said.

The four page paper carried a number of labour educational articles in addition to a full back page of advertisements for various commercial concerns, such as "If you can't see well . . . see P. Liston, Chemist and Optician, O'Connell Street". Or Frank Short, Society Hairdresser, Denmark Street. Familiar trading names in Limerick, like J.J. O'Toole, Shakespeare Bar, Grimsby Fish Stores, and Egleston Photographers, also appear in "The Worker". One firm which advertised did not survive: "P. McDonogh, Funeral Undertaker. All orders executed on the premises and moderate charges and with the upmost dispatch". One wonders what economic circumstances caused the dispatch of this firm.

A list of delegates, published in "The Worker", gives an indication of the scope of the Trades Council. Men came from the Printers, Carpenters, Bakers, Railwaymen, Bookbinders, Cabinet-makers, Plasterers, Hair-dressers, Masons, Tailors, Porkbutchers, Mill-sawyers, Plumbers, Coopers, and Harness-makers.

Like many of the old skills and trades, "The Worker" itself died, and passed into the history of trade unionism in Limerick.

THE "DOG" DIES

Another important event was about to be celebrated: the first birthday of the "Bottom Dog". "Long life to you little dog. Where would the poor be at all only for him and his ayquils? Where were we — I repeat — until the Little Labour dog barked out aloud in Limerick? Who bothered about the poor? The downtrodden? The unemployed?"

The issue was dated October 25th 1918 and with tragic irony Ben Dineen attended his last Trades Council meeting on that day. Within ten days he was dead . . . and the "faithful ould dog" barked no more . . .

The minutes of that meeting are the last in Ben Dineen's handwriting. Discussed was the bakers strike and the sending of bread to Limerick. The last known issue of "The Bottom Dog" appeared on 1st November and the front page was devoted to . . . "The Bakers Strike".

The Trades Council meeting of November 15th was adjourned, and in a pencilled addition to the brief minutes is written: "Proposed by Mr. Cronin, (pres) appeal for funds for Dineen family".

The meeting of November 25th was adjourned as a mark of respect to the late secretary, Ben Dineen . . . and so "The Bottom Dog" also quietly slipped into the forgotten archives of trade union history.

Six months later, in April 1919, the workers of Limerick were to capture the newspaper headlines of the world when they seized control of the city and formed a Soviet for two weeks. They printed their own money and administered the city as a protest against the British military harassment of workers. The ending of this general strike also marked the ending of one of the most stirring chapters in Limerick labour history in the period 1917 to 1919.

What did these men behind "The Bottom Dog" want? They set out their aspirations in poetic form in the paper itself:

DAILY WORK

*We mean to wear and share the wealth
Amassed by muscle, brain and health,
Some pleasure when the day is past,
With rod and hook,
Spade, cycle, book,
A decent home where love may last
Where laws of God can honoured be
A worker's nest,
Clean, cosy blest,
These are the things we want to see . . .
Have they?*

(To be concluded).

"IF YOU CAN'T DO A GOOD TURN"

That night he was in no condition for scripture, history, or tradition.

("Drunken Thady" by Michael Hogan).

The *Late Late Show* was televised live from Limerick on Saturday, March 13th. The pre-show publicity ensured the attendance of an overflow studio audience and a maximum viewing total of local people. An air of expectancy quickened into a ripple of excitement as the cameras began to roll on the programme. But the show failed to measure up to these expectations and caused widespread disappointment, especially among Limerick viewers.

The biggest disappointment was the performance of the Mayor of Limerick, Councillor Thady Coughlan. The appearance of Coughlan was to have been exploited as part of the general election build-up in the operation of selling the "Thady Coughlan package". But as a public relations exercise, the strategy misfired badly. The old maxim of not sending a boy on a man's errand again proved an apposite one. Coughlan himself contributed to his own downfall. Having allowed himself to be lulled into a false and dangerous sense of security by Gay Byrne's tongue-in-cheek question about whether he would like to be Taoiseach, the over-cocky Coughlan was "set-up" for the political questions that followed and his political shortcomings were quickly flushed to the surface.

Apart from the local adverse comment, the television critics on the national and local press had a field day in describing Coughlan's display. Ken Gray, in his column in the *Irish Times* on March 22nd, was not impressed with the Mayor. He wrote:

It will be interesting to see in the course of time if Mr. Thady Coughlan . . . gained or lost votes through his performance on the "Late Late Show". . . . He was, in the beginning, superconfident; determined to use the opportunity to make clear his support for the Government ("the best this country has ever seen"), to declare the integrity of his socialism and to promote himself as an up-and-coming young man. Some disillusionment set in when he was challenged to define socialism and was forced to dissassociate himself from the kind of socialism advocated by Noel Browne and Matt Merrigan. And there was more than a little confusion in his attempts to how his faith in private enterprise . . . can be reconciled with his political allegiance to socialist ideals. Worse was to follow when, from the audience, he was accused of using the occasion as an ego-trip and told bluntly he wouldn't be Mayor if it wasn't for the influence of his father. What had started out as a triumphant occasion was visibly turning sour.

Tom O'Dea, in his *Irish Press* article of March 20th, was even more forthright:

As the whole country must know by now, Mr. Coughlan is the twenty-five-year-old Mayor of Limerick and the son of the sitting T.D. Presumably because he is a member of the Labour Party, he was asked on the Late Late Show if he were a socialist. Even in the outer limits of the fringe reception area . . . they must have been able to detect Mr. Coughlan reading the danger signals. "If I can't do someone a good turn", he said, "I won't do him a bad turn". . . . A member of the panel, not satisfied with the answer, later asked Mr. Coughlan to elaborate. Wearing that all-purpose cute smile that seems to flash as readily as the links in his chain of office, he said, reaching for an identifiable metaphor: "I wouldn't be a fan of Noel Browne or Mattie Merrigan . . . I'm certain that they would recognise the cut of Mr. Coughlan's jib in South Boston, in Tammany Hall or in the backrooms of Mayor Daley's Chicago. He is clearly an up-and-coming young politician whose progress is unlikely to be impeded by the pitfalls of political principle.

Even the *Limerick Weekly Echo* joined in chorus of

criticism. In a front-page piece, the paper wrote: "To the outside world . . . Limerick is portrayed as the proud possessor of an indecisive and politically weak-minded Mayor . . ." In the "Bill Griffin" column of the same edition, another unfavourable comment about Coughlan also appeared: "It was I who fixed that strike, and he knows it. Thady had nothing to do with it". Thus the "Echo" journalist reported the private and annoyed remark of Tom Joyce, president of the Limerick Council of Trade Unions and a long-time friend of the Coughlans, made in response to the Mayor's claim that he had ended last year's Ferenka strike.

Many people were intrigued at the attempt by Coughlan to play the part of an experienced television politician, complete with his bland, artificial charm. Donal Foley in his *Irish Times* "Saturday Column" of March 27th spilled the beans on Coughlan's efforts in this medium:

Those who watched Mayor Thady Coughlan — issuing his socialist credo of non-belief in State bodies and his definition of Limerick socialism as not doing your neighbour a good turn . . . may not have been impressed by the content of his utterances . . . That flashing smile, refusal to get annoyed, eagerness to listen, are not born to the mayoral job . . . His secret is that he went back to school to the old T.V. maestro, Bunny Carr, to learn all about television and its pitfalls. He was a pupil of the Carr academy for potential T.V. businessmen in South Dublin.

But all the television grooming in the world and all his father's political promptings in the wings are not good enough. This fact was clearly shown by the Mayor's repeated inability to answer a simple question from Mrs. Cahill on the Late Late Show panel about the difference between public and private hospitals. Coughlan's basic lack of ability was further demonstrated by his comical and parrot-like definition of socialism, reminiscent of his father's equation of socialism with membership of the St. Vincent de Paul Society and the Wheelchair Association during his term as Mayor in 1970.

And so the carefully-planned campaign to transfer the East Limerick Dail seat from Steve Coughlan to his son, Thady, continues. But, after the *Late Late Show* debacle, more people have begun to see through the cynical scheme. Writing in the *Sunday World* on March 28th, "The Senator" echoed the feeling of these people when he stated:

Thady Coughlan appears not to be up to his Da. Stephen Coughlan had a bit of style; but his son appears to stand for nothing but the advancement of his own inflated personality. Nowhere in America have I seen such a brash fellow, not even hiding the fact of his incredible personal ambition . . . he is not a man fit to represent a fine city like Limerick . . . he is a fitting member of the Labour Party with attitudes to the right of Jimmy Tully . . . Stevie is coming here with us to the Senate.

Thus the scenario is sketched for the next general election: Thady for the Dail and Steve for the Senate. The political decks are being cleared and the campaign is now entering the home stretch. All considerations have been taken into account — except one: the common sense and intelligence of the ordinary people of Limerick. And it is on this sturdy rock that the whole cynical Coughlan campaign will eventually founder.

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LIMERICK SOCIALIST
EVERY MONTH**